

WASHINGTON -The first benefits under the Webb-Mitchell Post 9/11 GI Bill will begin to be disbursed on August first. The bill, which was signed into law last year, was introduced by U.S. Rep. Harry Mitchell in the House of Representatives and Sen. Jim Webb (D-Va.) in the Senate to provide veterans with enhanced new education benefits beginning this fall.

"We have a responsibility to serve those who have bravely served us," Mitchell said. "As a former teacher, I know the value of a quality education and I'm glad that this historic investment we are making in our veterans is coming to fruition."

Since May 1, 2009, VA has received more than 75,000 applications from veterans for the Post-9/11 G.I. Bill education benefit. According to Keith Wilson, the Director of VA's Office of Education Service, approximately 35,000 of those claims have already been processed by regional processing offices (RPO) located throughout the country. The VA has hired and trained approximately 530 temporary claims examiners to help process the large amounts of claims received. In addition, the VA has authorized all RPOs to hire 230 additional claims examiners.

Several outreach methods have been employed to raise awareness about the educational benefits that are available through the Post-9/11 G.I. Bill among the veteran community. The VA mailed approximately 2 million letters to veterans and has also been working with the Department of Defense (DOD) to inform all service members of the program. A valuable outreach resource is the VA G.I. Bill website, <http://www.gibill.va.gov/>, which is currently being redesigned to improve its functionality, navigation, and content delivery. VA also created a G.I. Bill Facebook page and there are plans to conduct a national marketing campaign. In Arizona, Mitchell held two G.I. Bill workshops in his district that drew over 300 interested veterans and National Guard members.

Under the Webb-Mitchell GI Bill, an estimated 2.1 million members of the military who have served on active duty since September 11, 2001, including activated reservists and members of the National Guard, will be eligible for up to four years of education benefits, including stipends for housing and books. Veterans will also have up to 15 years after they leave active duty to use their education benefits. Eligible veterans can apply for their benefits online at <http://www.vba.va.gov/pubs/forms/VBA-22-1990-ARE.pdf>

Mitchell has launched an Online GI Bill Resource Center to provide veterans with information and important resources on the Post-9/11 GI Bill. The Resource Center is available on his website's [Important Resources](#) page or by clicking [here](#).

Under the legislation:

- Service members, including those returning from Iraq or Afghanistan, can receive up to 36 months of education benefits, including stipends for housing and books.
- Veterans would have up to 15 years after they leave active duty to use their education benefits.
- Veterans would have the ability to use their benefits for program fees, tuition, books and housing.
- Veterans would be able to use the Yellow Ribbon G.I. Education Enhancement Program, in which the federal government will match, dollar for dollar, any voluntary additional contributions to veterans from institutions whose tuition is more expensive than the maximum educational assistance provided under the Post-9/11 G.I. Bill.
- Benefits are applicable for vocational schools and other non-traditional post-secondary educational settings.

The bill also includes a Yellow Ribbon G.I. Bill Education Enhancement Program which assists eligible veterans in covering tuition expenses that exceed the highest public in-state undergraduate tuition rate. As a part of the program, schools agree to cover up to 50 percent of the tuition that the Post-9/11 G.I. Bill does not cover. As of June 15, 2009, the VA has approved approximately 2,229 Yellow Ribbon Program agreements. Tuition and fee rates have been posted on the VA G.I. Bill website by August 1, 2009.